

The Playboy of the Netherworld

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rhythm; but in his style he shows the same
swift and
bitter strength:

I have huddled her into the wormy earth.
Let Heaven unscabbard each star-hilted
lightning.

If you would wound your foe,
Get swords that pierce the mind; a bodily
sKce
Is cured with *surgeons butter*.

Of the two supreme excellences of
Beddoes, then, as a
poet, this power of rhythm and phrase
seems to me one;
the other is sheer imagination. He has
ideas that are
poetic in and by themselves, quite apart
from their ex-
pression; like the silence of Ajax before
Odysseus in
Hades, like the symbols of Ibsen in his later
plays. Indeed,
the cry Beddoes wrings from the lips of one of
his characters might well be his own:

I'll go brood
And strain my burning and distracted soul
Against the naked spirit of the world
Till some portent's begotten.

It is a typically 'metaphysical' conception. Yet
he escapes
that frigid ingenuity which has so often been
fatal to poets
of this kind, in the seventeenth century,
and in the
twentieth—clever persons, who have yet
been so simple
as to suppose that their creations could live
and breathe
without a heart. Thus Beddoes, thinking of
Noah's Del-
uge, sees it, characteristically enough,
through the eye of
the daisy on which its first raindrop fell; but
he feels also
for the daisy itself with the tenderness of
Burns.

I should not say

How thou art like the daisy in Noah's
meadow
On which the foremost drop of rain fell warm
And soft at evening; so the little flower
Wrapped up its leaves, and shut the
treacherous water
Close to the golden welcome of its breast.